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THE MASSACHUSETTS HOME PROJECT PLAN OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION¹

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You are doubtless asking yourselves whether the Massachusetts plan of vocational agricultural education has been thoughtfully undertaken and whether it is yielding practical results. It is a big subject. I have over four hundred and fifty slides on it. Those which I am going to show you are a very short set, selected almost at random; and I hope you will believe me when I say that they are not in any sense the best slides. They are simply *a* set of slides selected to fit the time assigned. The most I can hope for is to give you a quick flight over the field—merely a bird's-eye view of our plan and some of the results.

First, I invite you to consider a little symbolism which I have been using for the past four or five years in the effort to keep my own thinking straight on this subject of vocational education. Remember, we are considering a type of education presumably for pupils over fourteen years of age, namely, the secondary-school age. We are considering a type of secondary-school training. The typical high school of ten years or more ago was a classical high school, a general school devoting itself to cultural subjects. This we might symbolize by a capital *C*. We have looked up to it, and justly so. Because that type of school met the needs of relatively few, there were those who thought we ought to have a different type of education of secondary grade for those who desired direct preparation for life. Because, again, there were so many cases where the boys did not go to the high school because they saw in the high-school courses nothing that would be of use to them, as they viewed it, there have been those who have made new ventures in the field of secondary education in what has been called "vocational training." This we may symbolize by a capital *V*.

¹ Address illustrated with colored lantern slides at meeting of Harvard Teachers' Association in Sandus Theatre, Cambridge, Mass., March 13, 1915.

These vocational ventures in education had a marked effect on the high-school courses. You will scarcely find a high school today which does not show considerable differentiation of courses. The determining factor in this differentiation is the career likely to be followed by the pupil in after-life and the desire that the pupil shall receive direct preparation for that career. Several distinct needs are clearly recognized by almost every high school. We have the preparation for the classical college over against the so-called "Latin scientific course" preparing for the higher technical institution. There are the courses in home-making for girls, and the commercial branches for boys and girls. In fact, a fairer symbol to represent the high school of today would be some such modified emblem as a large *C* and within it a small *v*. Much attention is still given to the cultural purposes of the high school, but at least some recognition is given to direct training for the career the pupil is likely to follow.

Similarly, along with the most direct preparation for the career of the pupil in the vocational type of school there have come decided cultural or civic values. So evident is this that I think we must agree that the vocational school of today, in Massachusetts at least, must fairly be represented by a large *V* with a small *c* within it.

In view of this development there have been those who have urged the desirability of a balanced type of training—not so much time given as in the cultural type of school to general studies, not so much attention given to direct preparation for a calling as in the vocational type of school—a type of school, in short, which might be symbolized by a rather large *C* superimposed upon a *V* drawn to the same scale. So far as the Board of Education is concerned, we erase from consideration this middle type. We recognize two distinctive types of training in the secondary field, one represented by the large *C* and small *v*, the other represented by the large *V* and small *c*. It is with the latter that we are to be concerned at this hour.

The first slides will show you a series of pictures illustrating somewhat the equipment appropriate to the distinctively agricultural purposes of the vocational agricultural school.

The Petersham High School will interest you because President Eliot was one of the most distinguished men at its dedication. This school has a beautiful building, erected in part from funds raised by taxation and in part from funds subscribed by public-spirited citizens. A small greenhouse was provided. The school has at its disposal about ten acres of land, on part of which there are a number of old apple trees that have been renovated by the pupils, and on part of which the pupils have set out a young orchard. I speak of this greenhouse, however, for the further purpose of saying that this is the only vocational school in the state that has a greenhouse, and because I wish to say at this point that we have instruction in a number of places where the school has not an inch of land or a head of live stock of any description at the school, the work of the pupil and the instructor, in class exercises and individually, being carried out on farms—usually the home farms of the pupils themselves. A greenhouse may be an advantage, but it is not required for state aid.

Outwardly the headquarters of an agricultural school or department may appear to be like any other school building. Once you are inside the schoolroom, however, you find yourself in a different kind of a room from the ordinary schoolroom. It corresponds more to the library-laboratory room or to the laboratory for the study of science. We cannot use ordinary school desks; we need more elbow room; we have to study pamphlet material, data which are available only in bulletin form. We have to keep accounts. That is, our pupils must have room to spread their material out before them. For this reason small tables allowing for each pupil a surface $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ feet are preferred.

In all cases you will find a selected list of agricultural publications and books with an appropriate filing system for ready reference. If you desired to see a good example near Boston of a well-equipped agricultural room, you could not do better than to visit the Concord High School Agricultural Department. There you would find, for example, an apple-packing table, made by the boys and used in teaching the boys. That table was also used at a short course in apple-packing given to twelve adult farmers who applied for it this last winter. In that same room you would find an admirable collection of samples of corn, heads of grains and grasses,

samples of grain and grass seeds affording standards for ascertaining the relative purity of seeds available on the market, samples of vegetable seeds, samples of chemicals used as fertilizers, samples of spraying materials, samples of feeds; you would find spraying implements. Though a school may have no land it may be an advantage for it to have a pretty complete equipment of tools which may be lent to pupils whose money should be carefully husbanded for buying fertilizers or for other needs extending throughout the season, as over against the pruning shears, which may be used but a few hours or a few days in a year. In this room, you would find poultry appliances, including incubators, different kinds of brooders, feeding-hoppers, and drinking-fountains. Not the least important, you would find a rack for farm papers and an excellent selection of publications of this kind received from week to week or month to month.

Of course, "related study" materials include non-book sorts, and these require care and protection; uniform packages or mounts are an advantage and add to the attractiveness and apparent order of the agricultural classroom. Finally, there is a well-kept bulletin board.

Now you want to know what the course of study is. That is usually determined by the vocation for which the individual prepares. I am now going to deal chiefly with the home-project plan of teaching agriculture. The home projects are graded with reference to the relative risks involved, the younger boys, of fourteen or fifteen, being assigned projects which involve the least risk, those in the later 'teens or in the twenties being assigned the projects involving the heaviest risks, and the intermediate risks being distributed through the intermediate years between those ages. For instance, boys of fourteen or so study the elementary plant projects, such as kitchen gardening and ornamental planting. Here the big item is labor, and the boys themselves furnish that. In the next grade, at fifteen or over, they get animal husbandry, dealing with small stock, such as poultry, sheep and goats, swine and bees. In the third year they get advanced plant projects, such as small fruit-growing, orcharding and market gardening, growing fruit and vegetables for sale. In the fourth year they finish with advanced projects in animal husbandry, dairying, and general

farm management and agriculture as a business. In addition to these supervised projects for any given year a pupil may carry out certain unsupervised projects on his own account, and he usually does. For instance, he carries on kitchen gardening, which is a first-year project, throughout the course; he may continue poultry-keeping, which is a second-year project, in the third and fourth years; and he may continue fruit-growing and market gardening, which are third-year projects, through the fourth year. Once the boy is started with the easier projects in the first year, he is encouraged and helped with them throughout the four years' course, and all through the four years the other members of his family are encouraged to co-operate with him, in the interest of producing the best possible home garden. The training all through is a training for self-help.

The agricultural instructors are on duty throughout the summer, some of them riding weekly circuits of forty, sixty, and even ninety miles in going from farm to farm among their pupils. They do a vast amount of "county agent" or "farm bureau" work among the adult farmers along their routes and hold appointments as "collaborators" of the United States Department of Agriculture, have the franking privilege, and work in the closest co-operation with the Massachusetts Agricultural College extension service.

The efficiency of the instructors as a unified body is promoted by mid-winter and mid-summer conferences at which they all meet at the agricultural college. At these conferences representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Education are present, which tends to insure team-work through the instructors for the benefit of practical farmers as well as the boys in the agricultural classes in every locality.

One striking feature of the results of the work is that during 1914 the earnings of 235 boys, in connection with good work at school, amounted to over \$42,000, all but about \$4,000 from farm work. Agriculture, in short, is the big interest of the boys who succeed in the vocational type of schooling.

Mr. Stimson illustrated with colored lantern slides details of equipment, courses of study, methods of instruction and supervision, home projects of all kinds and the methods of accounting followed. A few slides on the country boy's recreations were also shown.—EDITOR.